RUTHVEN'S WARD

BY

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CHAPTER I.—[CONTINUED.]

"Well, I've no alternative but to commit you for theft," said the magistrate, "with the option of a fine—three weeks, or a penalty of five shillings. Remove the prisoner, constable, and call the next case."

The hearts of the populace burned within them at the sentence, but beyond a low murmur, immediately checked by the cry of "Silence," they dared give their indignation no vent. Ruthven's heart burned in unison with theirs. That delicate, frightened-looking child, who had evidently neither understood the offense for which she had been brought there, nor the punishment that had been awarded it, to be sent to prison for three weeks, to herd with the lowest and vilest of her sex, and then to be released—for what end? Ruthven knew what he longed to do, but false shame and the fear of ridicule prevented him for a moment from carrying it out. But a long wail of terror, as the constables were removing the prisoner from the dock, decided him.

"Oh, sir! don't take me to prison," she screamed. "Don't take me to prison. I'll never do it again, indeed I won't. But I was so hungry. Let me off this time, and I'll never do it again—no! not if I die—indeed I won't." She was appealing frantically to the policemen, as if they had the power to mitigate her sentence, as they lifted her, not unkindly, but decidedly, off the scene of action.

"Remove the prisoner!" repeated the magistrate, angrily, as her shrieks reached his ears; and Ruthven's mind was made up. He went round and met the constable at the other entrance.

"I wish to pay this fine," he said, "and will look after your prisoner for a few days. I suppose it's allowable?"

"Of course it's allowable, sir. So long as the fine is paid, that's all we have to do with the matter. So now you'd better thank the gentleman for your liberty, and see you don't get into no more scrapes. D'ye hear?" and with a shake to Miss Peg O'Reilly, and a touch of his helmet to Ruthven in acknowledgment of a douceur over and above the stipulated fine, the constable went about his business, and left the liberated captive alone with her benefactor.

Ruthven felt himself to be in an awkward position. There were spectators to the interview, and he did not know what to do—what was best to be done. But the little girl was gazing up into his face with her wistful blue eyes, and the look of want and starvation upon her pinched features did more for her than any amount of elocution could have effected.

"Come here — Peg — what's your name? Are you very hungry still?"

"I'm allays hungry," the child replied, in a frightened whisper.

"You can speak out to me. I won't hurt you. Have you no friends nor home?"

"None, sir. I never did have."

"How do you live? Who feeds you?"

"I picks up things."

"And where do you sleep?"

"Under the market arches, and sometimes in a doorway."

"And aren't you cold at night?"

The girl only shivered for reply, and crossed her naked, dirty feet one over the other. As she did so, Ruthven marked they were covered with sores.

"Would you like to be respectable, Peg?"

"What's that, sir?"

"To be kept clean, and have warm clothes, and a good dinner every day."

"Shouldn't I! But no one won't give them to me."

"I will, if you'll be a good girl in return. Will you come with me, Peg?"

"Along with you! Of course I will, if you'll take me. Why, it's all because of you I ain't in prison. I'd go with you to the other end of the world, and be glad to."

"All right. I'll see what I can do for you. Here, cab!"

He hailed two cabs at the same moment, and, placing the child in one, took up his own position in the other. He felt very benevolently disposed—foolishly so, as he already began to tell himself; but he could not quite go the length of driving in the same cab as Miss O'Reilly. As the two vehicles took their way toward Kensington, Ruthven experienced some decided qualms of fear as to how Mrs. Garrett would receive the new addition to the household. She had told him only that morning that, sorely as it went against her grain to have a young girl racketing about the house, she felt she could not go on much longer without some help.

"For I ain't so young as I was, Mr. James, and the work Master Hamilton makes is past believing, what with his litter and his boots; and so, though I always says gals is not worth their salt, with their himpudence and their breakages, still some one I must have, or I shall lay up altogether, and the work will be at a stand-still."

Ruthven had suggested the assistance of a boy instead.

"Lor'! Mr. James, as if one boy in the house wasn't more than enough nuisance already. No, sir; no boys for me, if you please. If help I must have, let it be with as little trouble as may be; so, with your leave, I'll look out for a respectable young gal to do the scrubbing and such like for me."

Ruthven had remembered this speech as he stood in the police court. Mrs. Garrett wanted a young girl, and here was a young girl in want of a home. Why shouldn't she do for Mrs. Garrett?

It all seemed very feasible at the moment, but when he had completed the bargain, and was driving to Kensington to introduce his protege to his housekeeper, he felt that he might perhaps have been a little hasty. However, before he had had full time for repentance, the brace of cabs rattled up to his front door, and Mrs. Garrett appeared upon the threshold, ready to welcome the apparent visitors.

CHAPTER II.

NOTHING could exceed the housekeeper's surprise at seeing her master return home at so unusual a time of the day, except, perhaps, the intelligence which followed it.

"Bless my soul, Mr. James! nothing's the matter, I hope? You haven't broke your leg, nor heard bad news, nor had any misfortune, surely!"

"No, Mrs. Garrett, my legs are all right, thank you," replied Ruthven, leaping to the ground; "but look here! I want to speak to you for a moment," and, linking his arm through that of the old woman, he led her back into the passage.

"You told me, this morning, that you wanted a girl to help with the housework, and so I've brought you one."

"You've brought me a gal? Lor'! Mr. James, you're joking!"

"I am not, indeed. She's in the other cab; and I want you to be very kind to her, and look after her well, and all that sort of thing, for me."

"But you'll excuse me, sir, for asking. Who is she?—for you can't bring any sort of gal into a respectable house like this, to knock about the things and damage every article she touches."

Ruthven considered a moment. He felt it would not do, all at once, to initiate Mrs. Garrett into the antecedents of Miss Peg O'Reilly, and decided that a little innocent deception was necessary to win the housekeeper over to his cause.

"Now, listen to me, Garrett. I ask you to take charge of this girl for me as a favor. I know she is not all that she should be, in outward appearance at least, to form your companion; but, with your ready wit, you can remedy that in a few hours, and I have a peculiar reason for wishing to befriend the child."

"You know her people, then, Mr. James?" said the housekeeper, suspiciously.

"Of course—of course," he answered, hastily; "and all about her. She's been terribly misused and half starved; so feed her up well, and don't let her out of your sight; and here's a five-pound note. Get some clothes, and make her look decent as soon as you can; and—and—that's all. You'll find her in the other cab."

Saying which, Ruthven leaped back with all speed into his own vehicle, only desirous to get out of ear-shot before Mrs. Garrett should introduce herself to Peg O'Reilly. He could "do good by stealth," but he certainly "blushed to find it fame."

As soon as her master's cab had driven away, the housekeeper beckoned to the second one to advance, and descended the steps to welcome Mr. Ruthven's protegee.

What was her astonishment to find, sitting in a scared attitude at the bottom of the cab, what appeared at first sight to be a bundle of rags, and proved on nearer inspection to be a half-starved, weird-looking child, with filthy hair and skin, and a look of intense fright upon her features. The first disgusted the precise old woman beyond measure; but the evident fear of the poor girl was in excited her compassion.

"Lor' bless me! This can't be the gal as Mr. James meant?"

"Where's the gentleman? Him as is so kind to me?" demanded Peg, anxiously.

"The gentleman's gone away and left you to my charge, so you had better get down and come indoors with me."

"You won't send me to prison?" demanded Miss Peg O'Reilly.

"Bless the child! what are you talking about? Here, come, get into the house quick, do!—before we have all the neighbors' heads out of the windows staring at us."

And having bundled Peg out of the cab, Mrs. Garrett paid the driver's fare, with magnificent disregard of his laughter at her discomfiture, and followed her new companion into the house.

"And now I just wonder where Mr. James picked you up, and what call he's got to befriend you," she soliloquized, as she regarded her.

"He got me out of the perlice court, the gentleman did," replied Peg, staring at the unusual luxury by which she was surrounded.

"Why! you've never a thief, I hope," cried Mrs. Garrett.

"Yes, ma'am, I am," said the girl, unhesitatingly. "I took three onions, 'cause I was so 'lear,' and the perliceman saw me and took me off to the lock-up, and they would have sent me to prison, too, only the kind gentleman brought me here instead."

"Just like Mr. James," murmured the housekeeper; but she was a good old countrywoman, and Peg's story shocked her, less on her own account than on that of the girl's.

"Poor child!" she exclaimed, "it would have been just like 'em to have sent you there, a set of blundering old fools! And all for the sake of three onions! Hadn't you nothing better to eat, then?"

"Please, ma'am, I haven't had nothing to eat for three days at least."

"And what's your mother about to serve you so?"

"I haven't got a mother, nor a father, nor any one."

"Where do you live?"

"Anywhere's. I walk about the streets all day, and at night I sleep on the door-steps—only the policeman will make me keep moving about from one to the other all night."

"It gives me the shudders to think on," said Mrs. Garrett. "And Mr. James has actually picked up a gal out of the very streets to be his under-house maid. Why, we may all be robbed and murdered in our beds. Oh, these men—these men! They are so scatter-brained, there's no making head nor tail of them."

Her attention was diverted by Peg pulling at the skirt of her gown.

"I won't rob and murder, please, ma'am, I'd be glad to do something for the gentleman that brought me here. He looks so real kind, he does."

"And so he is, child—the best gentleman that ever stepped on the earth. What's your name?"

"They call me Peg O'Reilly in the market, so I suppose that's it. Some one told me once that my mother's name was Nan O'Reilly, and she sold matches, and she died in the work-house."

"And why didn't you stay in the work-house, then? Wouldn't they keep you?

"I stayed there till I was ten, and then a lady, who kept a grocer's shop, wanted me to be her servant; but she beat and starved me terrible, and so I run away from her and tried to get my own living."

"And a nice business you seem to have made of it. However, if you behave, you're provided for now; so you may think yourself lucky. But come along into the kitchen and I'll get you something to eat. I must give you a warm bath and get you some other clothes before Master Hamilton comes home, or you'll frighten him out of the house again."

"Who's Master Hamilton? Another gentleman?"

"Well, he'll be a gentleman some day, I suppose, if he lives long enough, and conducts himself as such; but he's only a lad at present. He's Mr. Ruthven's nephew; but no more like him in face nor sperrit, than you are."

When Peg O'Reilly had bread and cheese and cold meat set before her, she fell to work with a ravenous hunger that made the tears rise to good Mrs Garrett's eyes, and rendered the task that followed the meal less unpalatable than it otherwise would have been.

The girl could understand the uses of food and drink; but those of the bath were less familiar to her, and had it not been for the housekeeper's decision might not have proved so efficacious as they did.

"Now, I can't have no nonsense!" she exclaimed, as she saw Peg stepping into the warm water as daintily as though it had been the broken flints her bare feet were accustomed to traverse; "into it you go, head over ears, and you don't come out again until I've had my will of you. I've never had a speck of dirt in this house, and you don't begin it, I can tell you."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Boston garment workers won a complete victory in their strike.

CORNER OF ODDITIES.

SOME QUEER AND CURIOUS FEATURES OF LIFE.

Society in Newport Town—Riverhead Against Bloomers—A Man Who Claims to Have Been the Husband of Twenty-two Wives.

SOCIETY in Newport Town—
A funny thing it is.
One whooping, jolly gala day
Of frolic, sport and fizz.
The months may come, the months may go,
But what most puzzles me
Is, Who comprise the swagger set
In swell society?

The Joneses lunch the Greens and Smiths
In a manner fitting queens;
The Smiths then give a dinner to
The Joneses and the Greens;
The Greens then give an old-gold tea
To Mesdames Smith and Jones,
And that's what's called society
Upon those gilded thrones.

Society on Cherry Hill—
A funny thing it is.
Not quite so bong-tong, to be sure;
And beer instead of fizz;
But, tell me what's the difference
Between them? I can't see.
'Tis nothing more than tweedle-dum
Changed into tweedle-dee.

This evening Mrs. Calahan
Will rush the growler twice
For Mesdames MacAdoo and Toole—
If she has got the price.
To-morrow Mrs. Toole will send
The other two a cake,
Then Mrs. MacAdoo will hold
Next Sunday night a wake.

So Newport Town and Cherry Hill
Are not so far apart
In matters of "excloosiveniss,"
If so in wealth and art.
So where you will, the world is small,
And each one thinks he's swell;
But which is "the" society
I'm dashed if I can tell!

Riverhead Against Bloomers.

The new woman finds very little sympathy in the moral village of Riverhead, L. I. The introduction of bloomers as a part of cycling costumes is largely responsible for the coldness manifested toward her, and any wheelwoman with the hardihood to appear on the streets with abbreviated costume or divided skirts instantly feels the weight of public opinion. One wheelwoman, a stranger to Riverhead, received a severe shock through her progressiveness in dress, and her appearance furnished the elderly ladies of the village with a choice morsel of gossip. It was after the shades of night had fallen that the stranger was discovered, and all agree that she rode her wheel with grace and apparent comfort. These circumstances did not enter into the consideration of the women who object to such outfits. While gliding along a broad avenue the strange woman was actually hooted at by a party of women who oppose dress reform. This started a general discussion of the matter, and the young women of the village took sides with the elderly. One and all agreed that the bloomer costume was scandalous and should be prohibited in Riverhead. No dissenting voices were heard at the discussion, and bloomers received a setback. The county seat of Suffolk county wanted no abbreviations in cycling costumes, and that settled it.

"Bloomers! bloomers!" shouted one of the indignant women; "well I guess not."

The cry was echoed and re-echoed, and has become the argument of the objectors. This set the 200 women cyclists of Riverhead thinking, and not one of the number has had the courage to don the garb of tho new woman.

Where the movement will end is agitating the girls who secretly cherish a wish that the ban might be removed and that they might visit neighboring places equipped to enjoy a run with their sisters under the most favorable conditions. The idea that wheelwomen should be allowed to select their costume has taken root, and it is possible that a dress reform orgainzation may spring up. It is proposed to make the experiment of sending young women through the streets attired in black bloomers as soon as a suitable night comes. If this can be done without bringing the cyclist into contempt, the day will be won.

Says He Has Had 22 Wives.

J. E. Barber came to Lothair, in Montgomery county, about a year ago, with a handsome young woman and baby whom he claimed as his wife and child, says a Dublin, Ga., special. He came well recommended and procured employment as blacksmith. As soon as his business became somewhat monotonous he came here, and, in company with another man, embarked in the barrel stave business. The work proved profitable. While here he visited the house of an old woman named Gray. The household consisted of the mother and four daughters. Barber's visits were quite frequent. He at once became infatuated with one of the women, Mrs. Betty Gray, a buxom young widow, and the love was reciprocated, Barber asking her hand in marriage. To-day a large crowd of spectators assembled at the Gray domicile and witnessed the nuptials. 'Squire James Jones performed the ceremony. As soon as the contracting parties were made man and wife, Barber called the ministering official aside, and in an audible tone, said:

"'Squire, I am happy to inform you that this woman is my twenty-second wife, and in a few days I will have my twenty-third in tow."

Judge Jones was astonished. He hastily informed the witnesses, and an investigation was directed. Before any legal steps could be taken Barber and his wife had taken French leave for parts unknown. Mrs. Barber, No. 21, is left in a destitute condition, having neither money nor friends. She says that her marriage was a mock affair, she being under the influence of opiates during the performance of the ceremony, and that the official was an impostor. Her maiden name was Willy, and her home is in Marion county, Fla. She comes from respectable parents. Barber is from Orange county, Fla., and somewhere in those regions several living wives would like to hear from him.

Turning Deserted Houses Into Bullion.

Among the greatest mines of Arizona was the Vulture, now the property of H. A. W. Tabor, says a Phoenix special. It is fifteen miles southwest of Wickenburg, whence the ores were taken by wagons to be milled on the bank of the historic Hassayampa. The mine produced over $10,000,000 in gold, and the richest of the ore was found on the surface. Of course, in the early days nothing save the best was milled, and in the great waste dumps around the mine was found the building material for the town of Vulture. The mine worked on for a score of years with varying fortune, the town maintaining a large population, when the pipe line from the Hassayampa was washed away by the flood that followed the breaking of the Walnut Grove dam, the 100-stamp mill was closed down, and the camp was deserted. Three years ago T. E. Farish, the well-known miner, secured a two years' lease of the property, fitted up ten of the stamps, put in a gasoline engine, got his water out of the mine, and started to "cayoting" on the lower levels. Near the end of his lease he ran out of really good ore. In his extremity he bethought himself of the scores of tenantless houses. Every one was constructed of free milling iron oxide gold ore, and specimens chipped from the corners assayed an average of $20 to the ton. The last three months his stamp mill ran solely upon building material, much to the profit of its owner.

Mysteries of the Lunar Eclipse.

Careful observation of the recent lunar eclipse tended to show that the test proposed to determine whether the moon was partly illuminated during totality by the radiation of absorbed sunlight was insufficient to determine the extent and character of such radiation. Fifteen or twenty minutes after totality the illumination of the crescent of the new moon, or the moon's western rim, with a bluish white light, seemed to indicate that this portion, long in the sun's rays, was throwing off absorbed sunlight, and was, therefore, much brighter than the rest of the moon, which had received less, and was of a faintly reddish hue. At that time the northeastern quadrant was comparatively dark. While the western rim was undoubtedly brighter than any other portion of the moon during totality, it could not well be compared with the light which appeared on the eastern rim toward the close of the total phase. It was apparent that the moon during totality passed through a hollow cone of bluish white light. During the middle of the eclipse the moon barely touched the ring of bluish light, and was of a reddish color. Possibly this reddish appearance when the moon was near the middle of the hollow cone of bluish light was from radiation of absorbed light, but another explanation is that the light within the ring had been reddened by refraction through the lower stratum of our atmosphere. A well-defined bluish band, in advance of a field of red light, was a feature of the earth's shadow as it advanced upon the illuminated portion of the moon. This band would indicate some stratification of our atmosphere, if the color came from refracted sunlight. It was in this bluish band that the western rim shone brightly at the beginning of totality, and later the eastern limb, toward the close of the total phase. It would seem that total eclipses of the moon ought to be studied with the greatest care, for the purpose of gaining further knowledge of the earth's atmosphere. The phenomena of the moon's eclipse have not yet been sufficiently explained, and careful study for a series of years is needed to determine the nature of some of the appearances during totality.

Norway even now uses corn for coin.